DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 220 EC 150 603

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TITLE Identifying Emotionally Disturbed Children through Others-Concept Information.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (Washington, DC, August 23-27, 1982). Funding for this research was made possible by the Indiana State University Special Education Blumberg Endowments Fund.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Emotional Disturbances; *Handicap Identification; *Interpersonal Competence; Prediction; *Screening Tests; Secondary Education; *Social Adjustment; Social Development
IDENTIFIERS Paired Hands Test

ABSTRACT

Twenty-one elementary and 19 secondary emotionally disturbed (ED) children were administered the Paired Hands Test (PDT), an index of social adjustment in which Ss are asked to indicate what the hands in the photographed test item are doing. A list of emotional indicators was compiled by comparing Ss' test responses with those of 1235 nondisturbed students (grades 4-6). Seventeen indicators were found to identify 81% of the ED Ss and 25% of the normative sample when a criterion of three or more indicators was used as a cutoff. Further comparisons suggested that three or more indicators may be used as a further guide to clinical treatment. Analysis of PHT indicators for secondary Ss were not as conclusive. (CL)

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Identifying Emotionally Disturbed Children Through Others-Concept Information[1]

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The theoretical assumption underlying this research was that since emotionally disturbed children frequently have social adjustment problems, they are likely, when compared to better adjusted children, to have a tendency to interpret some social interactions differently. If so, this should be reflected in their responses to the Paired Hands Test (PHT), which in turn would provide psychologists with a helpful screening tool for emotional disturbance.

We did not expect to find any single way in which disturbed children respond differently to the PHT photographs; rather, we chose to adopt the model used by Koppitz for her Human Figure Drawing and Bender-Gestalt emotional indicators (Koppitz, 1969, 1964). That is to say, we decided to search for a number of indicators in the PHT, no one of which by itself would adequately differentiate disturbed from better adjusted children, but which together would comprise a helpful list for screening purposes. We decided to call the items in our list "emotional indicators", since Koppitz' term is so familiar to child clinicians and an accurate descriptor of what we hoped to find.

The remainder of this presentation will be a progress report. Unfortunately, the number of subjects available to us has not been large enough to enable us to arrive at final conclusions.

Subjects

The emotionally disturbed subjects whom we tested had all been assigned to special education programs for emotionally disturbed students on the basis of the PL 94-142 criteria. Twenty-one were in elementary school programs. Their ages ranged from 7 through 12; most were 9, 10, or 11. Nineteen others were in secondary school programs. Their ages ranged from 12 through 19, but most were 13 through 17. The comparison group samples will be described in the Results section.

Procedure

The individual booklet method of administration was used for the PHT. The elementary level booklet (PHT-E) was used for the elementary sample and the secondary level booklet (PHT-S) for the secondary school students. With either booklet the five choices for each photograph were read to the subjects unless they were good readers and preferred to read the list of choices themselves. Subjects had simply to indicate which one of the five choices came

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association
Washington, DC
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closest to their own idea of what the hands in the photographs were doing. A Human Figure Drawing and Bender-Gestalt test were also given to each subject and scored by the Koppitz system for exploratory purposes, even though it was recognized that the norms published in the Koppitz books were not based upon subjects above the age of 12 for the HFD and 10 for the Bender-Gestalt.

Results

PHT-E. A list of PHT-E emotional indicators was developed by comparing the responses from the group of disturbed elementary school children to those from the sample of 1235 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who were used for developing the original PHT-E norms a number of years earlier. The two groups, the disturbed and the norm group, were compared in terms of total score, individual responses, and what we have come to call subscale scores. From these comparisons a list of 17 emotional indicators was found which identified 81% of the ED group and 25% of the normative sample when a criterion of 3 or more indicators was used as a cutoff. Because our norm group undoubtedly contained some disturbed children, and a list which would not pick up any false positives could not be expected, these results were viewed as satisfactory. The list of PHT-E emotional indicators is given below.

PHT-E EMOTIONAL INDICATORS
(Guideline: 3 or more)

1. Total score 69 or below
2. 5 or more threes
3. 6 or more ones
4. 4 or fewer highs
5. 8 or more lows
6. 4 or fewer common responses
7. Photo 2-score value 7
8. Photo 5-score value 3
9. Photo 9-score value 1
10. Photo 11-score value 6
11. Photo 12-score value 3
12. Photo 12-score value 4
13. Photo 13-score value 6
14. Photo 14-score value 6
15. Photo 19-score value 3
16. Photo 19-score value 6
17. Both missing: Photo 2-score value 2 and Photo 19-score value 4

In order to explore the validity of this list of indicators, the following three comparisons were made. They are summarized in Table 1.

1. Two schools in the norm group were considered likely to have had a lower percentage of disturbed children. The number of children who had been tested in those two schools was 633. Only 19% of this group were identified as possibly disturbed by the list of emotional indicators, again using the cutoff of 3 or more indicators.

2. PHT scores were available on a group of 28 fifth and sixth graders who had been tested individually by the booklet method several years ago. Twenty-one percent of this group had 3 or more indicators. This not only provided some confidence in the consistency with which the indicators identified children from an unselected norm group, but also, since the original sample of 1235 had been group tested, supported the conclusion we arrived at several years earlier that group or individual administration with the booklets yields very similiar results.

3. Thirteen additional protocols of comparable age children diagnosed as emotionally disturbed were obtained. The list of indicators identified 69% of these children.

Table 1
Percent of Children Identified by
3 or More PHT-E Emotional Indicators

ED Groups			Comparison Groups		
Description	N	%	Description	N	%
Original sample	21	81%	Unselected norm group	1235	25%
Replication sample	13	69%	Selected norm group	633	19%
			Indiv. admin. norm group	28	21%

The results from all these comparisons, when viewed together, are encouraging, although more data are obviously needed. They suggest that if a child gives three or more of these indicators on the PHT-E, the psychologist has justification for seriously considering the possiblility that the child has some emotional difficulties, depending, of course, on the other information available, including data from other tests in the battery.

Since the original sample of 21 disturbed children were also given the Human Figure Drawing and Bender-Gestalt tests, I can report those results as well. Using Koppitz' criteria of 2 or more emotional indicators for the HFD and 3 or more for the Bender-Gestalt, we identified 16 of the 21 by the HFD and 11 by the Bender. Twenty of the 21 children were identified by either the PHT-E or the HFD. Obviously, most of the children were identified by both, and many by all three of the instruments.

PHT-S. Since we have been less successful in our search for emotional indicators derived from PHT-S, this part of our progress report will be very brief. Using the same approach described for PHT-E, but limited to 19 disturbed students at the secondary level and 441 in our unselected normative sample, we have developed a list of 10 indicators, 2 or more of which identifies 32% of the disturbed sample and 12% of the normative group. The list is as follows.

PHT-S EMOTIONAL INDICATORS
(Guideline: 2 or more)

1. Total score 69 or below
2. 4 or more fours
3. 0 or 1 fives
4. 0 or 1 common responses
5. Photo 6-score value 3
6. Photo 6-score value 7
7. Photo 9-score value 5
8. Photo 10-score value 5
9. Photo 15-score value 4
10. Photo 19-score value 6

The only other data available for comparison purposes were Hanlin's adaptive and maladaptive groups, described earlier in Hanlin's presentation (Hanlin, 1981). They were nominated through a consensus of judgments from teachers and a guidance counselor. There were 32 in the adaptive group and 14 in the maladaptive group who had taken the PHT-S. Twenty-nine percent of the maladaptive group were identified by the PHT-S emotional indicators, using 2 or more as a cutoff, and 9% of the adaptive group, which is in close agreement with the percentages found in our disturbed and normative samples. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Percent of Subjects Identified by
2 or More PHT-S Emotional Indicators

Maladjusted Groups			Comparison Groups		
Description	N	%	Description	N	%
Original ED sample	19	32%	Unselected norm group	441	12%
Hanlin maladaptive	32	29%	Hanlin adaptive	14	9%

The Koppitz emotional indicator results for the original sample of 19 disturbed secondary level students, which were applied for exploratory purposes despite the age of this sample, again using the Koppitz criteria of 2 or more indicators for the HFD and 3 for the Bender-Gestalt, showed that the HFD indicators identified 9 of these students and the Bender indicators identified 8. Fourteen of the 19 children were identified by at least one of the three tests.

Conclusions

Apart from the obvious conclusion that more research is needed, I think we can also say that the PHT-E emotional indicator data look encouraging to the extent that they may even now be used cautiously as a guide to careful clinical thinking. The PHT-S emotional indicators, on the other hand, at present fail to identify the majority of disturbed secondary level students, but seem to pick up fewer false positives. Their absence cannot help much in ruling out disturbance, but their presence may help to strengthen a clinician's judgment concerning the presence of disturbance.

All the data presented help to support our initial theoretical assumption that disturbed children would tend to respond to the PHT photographs differently from better adjusted children due to some differences in the way they interpret social interactions. A whole new area for us to explore will be <u>why</u> these differences appear on these particular items. In the meantime, these results are consistent with those presented in the other papers in this symposium, all of which tend to support a relationship between others-concept information and adaptive behavior.

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